

BACKGROUND SHEET
Frequently Asked Questions about the Proposed Timberline Trail
April 2009

About the Trail Itself

Q: Has the trail alignment been decided?

A: No. The original proposal for trail alignment was modified to incorporate comments received from the public and is currently being reviewed by stakeholders, neighbors, and residents. This second proposed alignment may also change based on comments received.

Q: Is there a map of the second proposed alignment?

A: Yes— please visit the County's website. Address is at the bottom of this page.

Q: Why was the original trail alignment staked if it was really only tentative?

A: Good trail development practice calls for establishing an accurate project budget. County staff created nearly 40 trail cross-sections at staked locations to estimate material and labor costs.

Q: What changed about the second alignment?

- A:
- (a) Existing legal County/Forest access points will remain for neighborhood use only and not to be developed into formal trailheads;
 - (b) Neighborhood access points will not be connected to the main trail;
 - (c) A single trailhead will be developed on Forest Service land along Elden Springs Road just off Highway 89;
 - (d) A loop trail will connect this new trailhead with two popular Forest trails, Elden Springs and Deer Hill trails;
 - (e) The main trail will connect the new trailhead with Hutchinson Acres to the north, in addition to Sandy Seep Trailhead and the City's FUTS terminus to the south.

Q: What will happen to all the user-created trails near Timberline subdivision, McCann Estates, and North Peak subdivision?

A: There are no plans to close social trails. Several user-created roads and trails are incorporated into

the original and second proposals for trail alignment. The rest will remain as they are.

Q: Do horses and bikers really get along?

A: Yes. Coconino National Forest reports no evidence of problems between equestrians and bicyclists using the same trail. Good trail etiquette minimizes user group conflicts.

Q: Can horses and bikers use the same trail surface?

A: Yes. The treadway of the main trail is planned to be six to eight feet wide with a surface of crushed fines that are compacted into native soil. The treadway of the loop trail is planned to be two to three feet wide with a surface of native soil.

Q: Why was the idea of a uniform 1000-foot buffer from private land dropped from the second trail alignment?

A: It is arbitrary and fails to address individual site characteristics. It is better to identify a quarter-mile wide corridor as an envelope within which the final trail alignment will be determined during the Forest's NEPA process. Three objectives will be balanced to the extent possible:

- (a) Utilizing existing user-created roads/trails and TMR-abandoned Forest roads wherever possible;
- (b) Creating new trail where the privacy of the abutting property owner or the viewshed needs of the trail user necessitate;
- (c) Adhering to Forest and County policies about protecting natural, biological and cultural resources, in particular wildlife habitat and archaeological sites.

Q: This is supposed to be a non-motorized trail. How will you enforce that?

A: The trail treadway will be 6-8 feet wide to accommodate families, baby strollers, bicyclists, hikers, skiers, and equestrians. Users will help enforce a trail etiquette that maximizes courtesy and holds users accountable for playing by the rules, including no motorized equipment. Signage and trail stewards will help users report violations to the Forest.

MORE INFO @ www.coconino.az.gov/parks.aspx
Coconino County Parks & Recreation
928-679-8000

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About Funding & Maintenance

Q: Can the proposed trail project be dropped?

A: Yes, the County's contract with Coconino National Forest for planning and permitting (NEPA) can be voided.

Q: What will happen to monies set aside for Timberline Trail if the project is dropped?

A: The Board of Supervisors will disburse the funds to another project named in the 2002 Coconino Parks & Open Space program.

Q: Could the monies set aside for Timberline Trail be spent on a commuter bikeway along the Highway instead of a recreational trail?

A: Yes, if Arizona Department of Transportation and Coconino County agree to partner on a bikeway within the highway right-of-way. Existing funds would not be sufficient so the partners would need to find additional resources such as federal multi-modal transportation grant monies. The bikeway would not be a facility built or managed by Parks & Recreation because it would be a commuter/transportation facility, not a recreation one.

Q: What about money for maintenance?

A: The County's Coconino Parks & Open Space program set aside funds to maintain the constructed trail through FY12.

About Public Input

Q: Why didn't I know about the project until this year?

A: Planning for the proposed Timberline Trail started in 2003. A local survey was distributed through Summit Fire District's newsletter in Spring 2004 with 95 surveys returned. Neighbors and county officials determined from the survey that a recreational trail was the top priority, and proposed an alignment on the Forest. Then, several years lapsed before the Forest was able to start its NEPA planning in August 2008. Please visit the County's website to find project summary, project history, and other materials.

Q: I understand neighbors signed a petition against the proposed Timberline Trail.

A: Yes. County officials received signatures of 172 residents from 124 households that strongly opposed the proposed project in December 2008.

Q: Do you know why they opposed the project?

A: No. However, 131 County residents took time to attend a public meeting on 14 January 2009. In all, 89 comments were received. Please visit the County's website for a summary of comments received. The top three problems with the proposed trail were:

- (a) Increased vehicular traffic and parking in neighborhoods at legal entry points;
- (b) Decreased privacy of abutting homeowners;
- (c) Increased use of the Forest by non-residents and vagrants.

Q: Who does benefit from the proposed project?

A: County residents, whether living in eastside Flagstaff or further away, are not likely to use the network of existing, unauthorized trails along the east slope of Mount Elden. Timberline Trail would provide a well-designed, well-maintained trail for them to access the lower Mount Elden area. Attendees at the 14 January 2009 public meeting cited three benefits:

- (a) Improved healthy outdoor recreation opportunities in the area;
- (b) Better connectivity for commuters into Flagstaff from the Doney Park area;
- (c) Safer connectivity to the Flagstaff FUTS and Forest system trails.

Q: Why does Flagstaff Biking Organization (FBO) have any standing in this project?

A: FBO is one of four partners to a Memorandum of Understanding for Flagstaff regional trails planning, construction, and maintenance.

Q: How can I contribute my suggestions or opinion?

A: Send your written comments to Jan Bush (jbush@coconino.az.gov or Coconino County Parks & Recreation, HC 39 Box 3A, Flagstaff AZ 86001) or Brian Poturalski (bpoturalski@fs.fed.us Coconino National Forest, 5075 North Highway 89, Flagstaff AZ 86004).

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